

*The Behaviour of the Cl—gy, as well as
their Traditions, destructive of Religion.*

Or, A Succinct

HISTORY
OF
PRIESTCRAFT,
Throughout all AGES.

CONTAINING,

A general Introduction of the Institution of all pretended Revelations. — Remarks on *Priestcraft* amongst the *Greeks*: The strange Superstition of that learned People, proved to be the Ruin of *Athens*. — Remarks on *Roman Priestcraft*, their *Augurs*, *Pontiffs*, &c. — An Account of the *Bramins*, *Bonzées*, *Talapoins*, and other Eastern Priests: with a curious History of the *Pharisees* and *Sadduces* among the *Jews*. — *Popish Priestcraft* unveil'd, particularly with regard to our own Island.

Concluding with

The Secret Intrigues of the GOWN with all Parties from the *Reformation* to the *Vicars Ap---cy*.

Dedicated to the Most Worthy Set of Free-thinkers.

That it may please thee to illuminate all Bishops, Priests and Deacons, with true Knowledge and Understanding of thy Word; and that both by their PREACHING and LIVING they may set it forth and shew it accordingly. Liturgy of the Ch. of England.

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Of A Successor.

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Athenians — Remarks on the
Greek History. — An Account of the
Bible, &c. &c. — The
a curious History of the
most the Jews &c. &c. &c.
richly with regard to our

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in his publications, respects the

Published by the Cl. &c. as usual



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under the Cl. &c. as usual



TO THE
Most Wise and Excellent *Sect*
O F
FREE - THINKERS.

Worthy **SIRS,**



S the following Pages contain
a full and exact Relation of
that continual Struggle which
has in all Ages been suppor-
ted by your Illustrious Society, against
Enthusiasm, Superstition, and Priestcraft ;
I knew not where so properly to dedi-
cate them on their Publication, as to
those for whose sake they were written :
taking occasion at the same time, to

DEDICATION.

congratulate You on the flourishing State of your Opinions, to which even Priests themselves, through the Love of Fame or of Truth, are come over : For what other Ends could induce the pious and Learned T--l, W--n, B-w--n, to forsake all hopes of Preferment, and openly declare against the Religion of their Fathers and their Country ? What tho' there may remain, or rather seem to remain, some little Differences among them, concerning a *Miracle* or *Fig-Tree* ? yet as long as they all join zealously in the good old Cause, of asserting Liberty, and exposing the Clergy ; they ought each to preserve a just Share of Applause, as they ever shall of Esteem, in the Breast of,

Ec.





THE
EPISTLE
TO THE
READER.



Hough most of our Modern Wits declaim as furiously against Prefaces and Introductions, as our Modern Patriots do against Bribery and Corruption; yet as I take all Books to be a kind of Visits from the Author, to his Readers, methinks it is not amiss, if we make our Honours at coming into the Room. In pursuance of which Maxim, and in order to bespeak your Favour, Courteous Gentlemen, do ye see, I thus

thus scrape ye a Bow, and then to the Business.

It is impossible but ye must have heard of Parson Bowman, and his celebrated Sermon. That Prodigy of Priests, whose Modesty, and Love of Truth, excited him to expose the whole Order: Upon which Account he is esteemed a most excellent Person by Polite People, is likely to be chosen Chaplain to the pious Sect of Free-Thinkers; and to be remembered, as the Society drops off, with twenty Pounds, and a florid Paragraph in their Wills, to convince the World, both of his and their Zeal for Infidelity. Tho' not to conceal Truth, there are some godly Folk, who enquire seriously, if he does not hide a Couple of Cloven Feet under his Gown, take the Thing he calls his Sermon for a Libel, both on Scripture and Clergy, and are actually in some Doubt, whether he be only the Forerunner of Antichrist, or the Man of Sin himself. But it has deservedly render'd him famous, and thereby answered the Doctor's End; it has even enobled the
Place

Place he dwells in; and Dewsberry shall be recorded for its Vicar, unto the World's End. Nay, it has done yet more, it has revived Parson Betty's forgotten Sermon in Praise of the Priesthood, and raised that zealous Divine from his Grave, to dispute with our Doctor on the Merit of their respective Declamations, which stand like a Pair of Chandlers Scales, one as much above the Horizon of Reason, as the other below it.

Now let which will be in the right, do ye mark me, it has made all the Town ring with Controversy, and contributed much to the Benefit of those worthy Members of the Republick of Letters, the Stationers and Booksellers of London, and Westminster. But having carefully observed, that both Parsons, to shew their Learning, have begun with ransacking the most distant Nations, and appealing to the most early Ages, for the Confirmation of their Opinions; that Priests have been fetch'd out of the East-Indies by one, and Druids and Culdees raked out of their Graves
after

iv To the R E A D E R.

*after more than a Thousand Years Rest by
t'other; I thought it might be of prodigious
Service, especially to such Beaus as would
shew their Parts upon this Subject, to give
them a Succinct History of the Free-Think-
ers Struggles with Priesthood, through-
out all Ages; including all that can be
said on that popular Topic, the contempt
o' the Clergy; by exposing the Frauds of
their Order, from Dan to Bersheba: So
that binding up my Book, with the Inde-
pendent Whigg, they may make it the
same Complement, as the Parson did my
Lord of L---nd---n; (tho', as some think,
a little at the Expence of his Bible.)*

Unicus est nobis Bibliotheca Liber.

No more I'll buy how ere of Pelf-full,

This single Book's to me a Shelf-full.

*And on its Strength, venture to argue,
instance, or apply, with the learned st Black-
Coat of them all.*

I sup-

To the R E A D E R. v

I suppose there needs no great Asseveration, that I am very desirous my Work should take, and that the true Design of this Epistle is to gain your Approbation. After what I have said, I think I can urge nothing stronger than Gratitude. You must consider Gentlemen, the Pains I have taken, the Nights I have broken my Rest, in turning over crabbed Latin; and the Days I have spent in poring over pale-fac'd Greek. Nay, and if I have but one Reader, who understands the Language, he will perceive that I have decyphered Hebrew, and have consequently had the trouble of reading backwards and forwards in all the learned Tongues, (tho', I must own, I had a small private View in it of succeeding the late Mr. C---ll---ns) in order to abuse the Cl-----gy. If all this will not move you, let me intreat you to reflect on the hazard I run from the L--w--n Sl-----s, in the Upper House: If they should ever take it into their Heads to vindicate their Order, what a sad State shall we be in then! for all I know Mr. B--wm---n's Preface

A

might

might become a Prophecy, and the neglecting
Horace's Rule,

— Sescernere, sacra profanis.

Cost one a Whipping at the Cart's A--se.

Having thus told you the Merits I depend on for your Favour, let me next take notice of some little Slips, you must excuse. In the first place, I must entreat your Pardon, for my now and then talking somewhat gravely; Homer himself you know nodded a little, especially in his *Odysses*; 'twas a small twang of Madness kept up the Spirit of *Lucretius*, and his Translator; but as for T--nd, Tind--l, G--rd--n, C--ll--ns, and A(g--l), they have as well as I slept for whole Pages. Nay, I have heard our Reverend Brother B--wm--n's Sermons were so much inclined to that Stile, which is properly called the Soporifick, that his Hearers often took a Nap by Sympathy; insomuch that one Reason for the Choice of his late famous Subject, was to try if for once he could not keep them awake.

I have been as cautious as I could for
my

my Life, to quote nothing without Translation; but if I could recommend it to free-thinking Students, to get the Originals by heart, so as in all Coffee-house Disputes to apply them patly, I should think I had done mighty Service to the Cause: For since I perceive how much Learning declines amongst our Sect, I should be very well pleased, that something like it should be kept up, and our Enemies not have it in their Power of reproaching us, with the want of what raised our Predecessors, viz. a Smattering of Languages, and talking loudly at least of Knowledge, tho' perhaps they were not too deeply versed in it. For, as has been observed by one of our Adversaries, a Spice of Learning sets up a Free Thinker; and a large Share on't breaks him again.

There is one more Caution to be afforded you, and I have done. You will perceive some Irregularity in the manner of this Work; sometimes I speak my self, at other times I introduce the Sentiments of other Persons, and anon I have recourse to Quotation: You will perhaps expect I should assign a Reason for this: why truly, I have

viii **TO THE READER.**

many, but think fit to hint only at one, viz. Mr. Os---n seems to have a Pen for broaching B---my, as appears by his Essays on the Resurrection, &c. and therefore it might be construed into an Infringement of his Province, if one should trespass that way, 'till his term is expired.

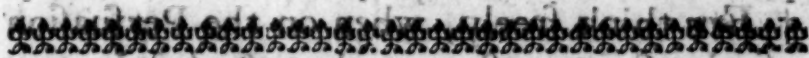
By this ——— I expect your Stomachs raised, and therefore I bid you heartily welcome, to a Free-Thinker's best Feast, a Dish of Roasted Parsons.



THE



T H E
Behaviour of the CL--GY,
As well as their
T R A D I T I O N S,
Destructive of RELIGION.



C H A P. I.



ALTHOUGH since our enjoying both Spiritual and Temporal *Liberty*, from the happy Effects of the late glorious R E V O L U T I O N, many Treatises have been written to expose the *Usurpations* of the *Priesthood*, and many also, with a view to recommend the Principles of *Free-Thinking*; Yet I know not how it happens, but I have met with no *body* who hath undertaken to give us, any *Regular History* of the *Disputes* between the two contending *Parties*, viz. the *Abettors* of *Priestcraft*, and the *Partizans* of *Human Reason*. Tho' as the Sequel of this *Work* shall prove, it

B

was

was on their *Principles*, that those Differences have been occasioned, which have divided the World, and raised those Distinctions, which several Sects have contended for, with so much Heat and Vehemence to this Day. *Free-Thinking*, tho' perhaps a new Name, has been however in the World ever since it began; and a learned *Brother Author* on our side, would certainly have succeeded better, if instead of * *Christianity*, he had asserted, *Free-Thinking to have been as old as the Creation*. Sure I am, that I can produce an Instance very near it. Did not † *Eve* think freely, when on the Persuasion of the Serpent she eat the *Apple*? I agree indeed it had been better, if she had let it alone; but it was the Effect of *Free-Thinking*, tho' a Mistake; and as such the Error was punished: But her using her *Reason freely*, tho' the fatal Cause of it, is not, as I find, censured. Thus then *Eve*, who was literally (according to the *Mosaick History*) *the Mother of all Flesh*, was in respect of *Opinion* also, *the Mother of Free-Thinking*. Having thus given you the Original of our Sect, I intended you also a Definition of their Faith, and a short System of their Doctrines, and so to have proceeded to an Account of *Priestcraft*: But

* A late famous Book bearing this Title.

† The *Free-Thinkers* acknowledge *Moses* as an Historian, and urge whatever they find in his Works in their Favour.

finding that some Retrospection would be necessary, with respect to *Religion* in general, I mention'd my Thoughts to a Friend who had long studied these Points, and desired his Opinion. He gave it me in writing as follows: And tho' as you may perceive, he has a strong Tincture of the *Errors of Education*, yet as there is something curious in his manner of Deduction, I dare say it will not displease.

“ RELIGION, or Worshipping the
 “ pream Power, is so natural a Consequence
 “ of believing one, and that again, is so
 “ strictly united with our Reason, that we
 “ see no Nation so rude, no People so barbarous,
 “ who have not received them both;
 “ and in some manner owned a Divinity,
 “ and payed Adoration. When the Knowledge
 “ of the true God decayed, thro’
 “ the Corruption and Ignorance of Mankind,
 “ many new and ridiculous Notions
 “ were started, and prevailed. For first,
 “ Men observing the regular Course and
 “ Motion of the heavenly Orbs, and considering
 “ the apparent Influence they have
 “ on sublunary Bodies, from thence conjectur’d,
 “ that either they were Beings of
 “ an excellent Nature, or else that they
 “ were guided and directed by such Beings.
 “ Hence they took these for Gods, and fell
 “ to worshipping them: And as the Occasion
 “ of this sort of Idolatry was general,
 “ through-

“ throughout the Globe, so was the Prac-
 “ tice of it likewise. *Princes*, Founders of
 “ vast Empires, such as * *Nimrod*, were
 “ first revered by their Successors, and in
 “ process of time adored by their Sub-
 “ jects. † *Families* raised to themselves
 “ particular *Gods* from the most worthy
 “ of their *Ancestors*; and FEAR also helped
 “ in the Creation of *Divinities*, when *War*,
 “ *Diseases*, and such like, found Admit-
 “ tance into the Catalogue of *Celestial*
 “ *Powers*. Worship of this kind, natural-
 “ ly introduced *Priesthood*, and as Im-
 “ pressions of *Religion*, consequently made
 “ Men tractable, and obedient; Policy came
 “ to have a large Share in Ecclesiastical In-
 “ stitutions; and *Revelations* grew an or-
 “ dinary Preface to the establishing of Laws.
 “ § In fine, what is usually observed of the
 “ *Princes* in the most antient Times, that they
 “ united both Crown and Mitre, is a strong
 “ Proof of their making this use of Reli-
 “ gion, as being sensible, how soon Peo-
 “ ple submit to what is commanded by In-
 “ spiration, and how hardly they would
 “ yield Obedience to the same Things, if
 “ enjoyed only by the Civil Power. † Thus
 “ *Numa* by pretending Conferences with the

* Owned as a Deity under the Name of *Belus*. † Vid.
Weems of the *Four Degenerate Sons*, p. 165. and *Grotius* de
verit. lib. 4. § Usual in all Writings in favour of the Clergy.
 † Vid. *Livy*, *Plut.* and others.

“ Nymph

“ Nymph *Aegyria*, found a way to intro-
 “ duce *Religion, Ceremonies, and a Priest-*
 “ *hood* amongst the *Romans*; and by their
 “ help, reduced them from a boisterous,
 “ and tumultuous Nation, to live under the
 “ Restraint of Laws, and a Regard for the
 “ good of their Society. * *Lycurgus* had
 “ recourse to the same Method, and tho’
 “ in the general, both these Instances were
 “ to good Purposes, yet the same Means
 “ have often been practised to *Bad*. For
 “ Example, When † *Mahomet* induced
 “ the *Arabs*, by sham Pretences of *Com-*
 “ *munication with God and his Angels*,
 “ to receive a § *Motley Worship* full of Ab-
 “ surdities, and fitted only for secular Pur-
 “ poses, such as advancing his Power, and
 “ giving a lawless and unbounded Swing to
 “ his Pleasures, with which having once
 “ infatuated the Minds of the People, he
 “ spread even in his life time, the *Arabian*
 “ *Dominion* (by the *Mission* of the *Sword*
 “ which he pretended was the Seal of his
 “ Commission from *Heaven*) thro’ a consi-
 “ derable Tract of the East, which has
 “ ever since continued to encrease, tho’ it
 “ be now more peaceable in its Spirit, than
 “ at its Institution. Such being the Origi-
 “ nal of these pretended Revelations, what
 “ could be expected from the *Priesthoods*

* Vid. *V. Max.* † Vid. *Dr. Prideaux’s Life of that Im-*
 postor. § An Account of the *Mahometan Faith*, &c.

" that were established for their *Propa-*
 " *gation*, but Tricks and Artifices of the
 " same sort! *Religion* in those Days was not
 " as it is now, made the Tool of the State,
 " from the base Inclinations of its Professors,
 " but was really so in itself, *instituted* for
 " that *Purpose*, and continued also as an *En-*
 " *gine* for that End. * The *Romans* there-
 " fore, were careful to preserve such par-
 " ticular Branches of the Priesthood, as
 " were most proper to affect the *Temper* of
 " the *People*, and produce such Effects as
 " they desired, in the hands of *Patricians*,
 " who took their Measures † from the Se-
 " nate, and were often of great use to the
 " State, by help of that Veneration, which
 " from their Quality, their manner of
 " Living, their being esteemed capable of
 " knowing the Will of Heaven, and by their
 " Arts of Divination, they had gained a-
 " mongst the Vulgar. And that the repu-
 " ted *Oracles* of *Greece*, were of a like
 " Stamp, we may guess from the *Sarcasm*
 " upon them, that they *Philipized*, i. e. were
 " help'd in their *Divinations*, by *Mace-*
 " donian Gold. Tho' Proceedings of this
 " kind, set off with *solemn Rites*, and as it
 " were gilded by § *publick Sacrifices*, *Pro-*
 " *cessions*, and *Games*, as in *Greece* and

* Vid. *Bowman's Sermon*, *Augur's*, and *College of Pontiffs*.
 Vid. *Pomp. Latius cap. de Augur.* † Vid. *Plut.* § Vid.
Lipsius.

“ *Rome*, might impose on vulgar Under-
 “ standings, who always place the Essence
 “ of *Devotion* in *Ceremonies*; yet the De-
 “ lusion would never pass upon Minds of
 “ a more elevated reach of Thought; who
 “ by considering the Nature of the Deity,
 “ from the glorious *Fabrick* of his *Works*;
 “ the daily Instances both of his Power, Wis-
 “ dom and *Providence*, must necessarily fill
 “ their Breasts with higher and more eleva-
 “ ted Ideas, and discover the inconsistency of
 “ paying such absurd Adorations to an om-
 “ niscient Being. What then must they do,
 “ in a World generally affected with *Super-*
 “ *stition*? they were bound, either to
 “ comply with the *Religion* of their Coun-
 “ try, concealing their own Sentiments, or
 “ at least expressing them very obscurely,
 “ as most of the Philosophers did; it being
 “ both the wisest and the safest way: Or
 “ they must have had recourse to Reason,
 “ and Argument, in Defence of their Opi-
 “ nions, which in popular States, is often
 “ dangerous as well as in Kingdoms, Reli-
 “ gion being so necessary, and consequently
 “ so sacred to the State, that the least At-
 “ tempt was considered, not only as a Crime
 “ against Heaven, but also as a kind of Trea-
 “ son. Such an unseasonable Opposition to
 “ *Vulgar Divinity*, proved fatal to * *So-*

* *Diogenes, Laertius*, and many others.

crates, and a bare Suspicion that * *Aristotle* was not Orthodox, as to the received Notions in *Athens*, occasioned a Persecution against him, which obliged that great Man to fly, and afterwards, as some Authors say, broke his Heart. I know † a late Writer much admired by his own Party, would very feign rank *Socrates*, and some other wise Men both of *Greece* and *Rome*, under a new Sect called *Free-Thinkers*; but as far as I have been able to understand the Tenets of that Sect, (which seem, as the Principles of Religion often are, Secrets unto the Professors) their *Origine* may be referred to another Cause, which to speak freely, I take to be this. Some of the *Pagan Mysteries* were so monstrous, others so ridiculous, and the *Behaviour* of the *Priests* in general so scandalous, that Men of great natural Understandings, saw thro' all their Pretences at a Glance, and immediately perceived the Marks of human Policy in the Construction of these Revelations, and of human Frailty in the carrying of them on; but above all the Excess of human Folly, which had so rivetted the Belief of them in *Vulgar Breasts*, that if Occasion had required it, possibly they might have become *Martyrs*. In such Circum-

* *Rapin's Comparison between Plato and Aristotle. Justin Admonit. ad gentes.*

† *Mr. Collins.*

stances,

“ stances, * these more intelligent Persons
 “ threw off this incongruous load of *motley*
 “ *Divinities*; they laugh’d (as well they
 “ might) at the *Rapes* of *Jupiter*, the
 “ *Adulteries* of *Venus*, and the *Thefts* of
 “ *Mercury*; they could not away either
 “ with the silly, the cruel, or the lewd
 “ *Mysteries*, instituted to the Honour of
 “ these pretended *Deities*: But having got
 “ thus far, here they stopp’d; and priding
 “ themselves in having overcome *Valgar*
 “ *Errors*, either totally neglected any
 “ Search, into what, from the Works of
 “ Nature, might be discovered of their Al-
 “ mighty Author, or else † elevated with
 “ presumptuous *Opinions* of their own
 “ *Wisdom*, pretended to assign new *Cau-*
 “ *ses*, which were as weak, as trifling, and
 “ as far below the Dignity of *Reason*, as
 “ those, in whose stead they were to suc-
 “ ceed; mostly mingled, § where they were
 “ at liberty to vent them, with the sharpest
 “ *Raillery* against the *Devotion* paid to the
 “ *Gods*, and the most *stinging* REFLEC-
 “ TIONS on all RELIGION: themselves
 “ leading Lives suitable to their *Principles*;
 “ suggesting that if there were *Gods*, they
 “ resided in some *Seventh Heaven* or other,
 “ totally free from all Care, leaving the U-

* *Diogenes, Democritus, Epicurus.* † *Democritus and Epi-*
curus, who assert the Generation of the Universe from Atoms.
 § *Vid. Lucretius and Lucian.*

“ *niverse* to the Guidance of *Chance* and *se-*
 “ *cond Causes*, where the Corruption of one
 “ thing, was the Generation of another, and
 “ where the Basis of all Wisdom lay in using
 “ the present Time; since Futurity was un-
 “ certain, and their much admired Apothegm,
 “ * *Let us live to Day, for to morrow we die,*
 “ speaks at once the Wit, the Sentiments,
 “ and the Morals of these Followers of
 “ *Epicurus*, or rather of *Lucretius* his Sy-
 “ stem. These Sir, are the indisputable
 “ *Parents*, of you modern *Free-Thinkers* †,
 “ as the last mentioned Authors Works,
 “ continue a sort of Bible amongst ye to this
 “ Day. And hence it comes to pass, that ye
 “ still preserve a sort of hereditary Hatred
 “ to *Priests*, even under a real and most ex-
 “ cellent Revelation, which your Ancestors
 “ contracted against a Set of false *Teachers*,
 “ a sort of Forgers of holy Lies, whose
 “ Care it was to support, because them-
 “ selves were supported, by *Delusion*. I
 “ wish I could add to render ye inexcusable,
 “ that all pious *Frauds*, all Arts of *Supersti-*
 “ *tion*, all Endeavours to grasp at *World-*
 “ *ly Things*, by seeming to despise them,
 “ were banished from amongst those who
 “ profess themselves Believers of the *Gospel*,
 “ or that finally *Priestcraft*, were a *Thing*

* Vid. *Lucretius*, the Poems of *Anacreon*, and some even
 of the Odes of *Hor.* † The ever memorable Fable of the
 BEES. The Oracles of Reason, &c.

“ utterly,

“ utterly unknown to a *Christian*, or even
 “ to a *Protestant Priesthood*. But alas!
 “ These are Wishes formed in vain, now
 “ the Apostles are gone, and Miracles cea-
 “ sed, *Religion* depends on the ordinary
 “ *Protection of Providence*, and the *Lives*
 “ and *Actions*, as well as the *Words* and
 “ *Doctrines*, of a *Clergy*, must either ruin
 “ or support it. We live in an Age, where
 “ *Events* justify, not *Causes*; and where
 “ the Merits of the *Professors*, are thought
 “ the best *Arguments* for or against a Pro-
 “ fession.”

So much at present for the Opinion of an
 Enemy, which in Cases where he admits
 our Reasonings, is the strongest *Proof* of
 their being *just*: but fearing my Readers
 might be tired with his *Gravity*, and Care
 of Quotations, I have omitted some, and
 shall make use of the rest of his Letter,
 on a proper Occasion. In the mean time,
 give me leave to proceed in shewing the
 Danger of carrying *Religious Disputes*
too high, which I may safely appeal to all
 the World, is the continual failing of the
Cl--gy.



C H A P. II.

WHEN one considers the *Blood* that has been *spilt*, the *Kingdoms* that have been ruined, and the *Multitudes* which have been destroyed in religious Quarrels, what an Opinion can one entertain of that Principle, from whence all these dreadful Evils have *overflow'd*? when we are reading the *human Sacrifices* that were offered by the *Heathens*, when we peruse the Slaughter of the *Benjamites*, by their Brethren about the *Concubine* of a *Levite*, or reflect upon the Stories of the *Inquisition* and the furious *Persecutions* against *Hereticks*, amongst the *Christians*, how readily may we *exclaim*?

Tantum Religio potuit suadere malorum.

Such mighty Ills! *Religion* could persuade!
When warp'd by Men, and sunk into a Trade.

And yet if we examine the Principles either of the *Laws of Nature*, the *Revelation given by Moses*, or its Accomplishment from the

the Ministry of JESUS, and we shall find nothing in these Laws, which tend to the Destruction, but on the contrary, to the establishing of Peace, Quiet, and Hope amongst Mankind, and propagating whatever may conduce towards rendering the Course of Life innocent, or easy.

WHITHER then must we now refer for the Cause of those Evils, which Reading and Experience shew, to have flowed at least with the Current of Religion? Surely to the Priests; who throughout all Ages have had Revenues assigned them, that they might the better attend the Service to which they were appointed, and who have as constantly employ'd those Revenues, and whatever Reverence their Character or their Arts could procure them, in meddling and gaining Authority in secular Affairs; either hoisting themselves into the Possession of all Power, as the *Magi* in *Persia**; or else bargaining for a Share with some Party in the State, to the Assistance of which they have prostituted the Dignity of their Profession; and as far as it was in their Power, the Honour of Heaven; as may be easily shewn from both *Latin* and *Greek* Historians, and appears too generally in the Stories of remoter Nations, whenever with any Fullness and Certainty they come to be known.

* Who set up one of themselves on the Death of K. *Cambyses*.

THE End for which Religion, and consequently Priests, have been established in every Nation, was undoubtedly to polish the Minds of the People; and by the Awe of the divine Being, however worship'd, to keep them from indulging their Passions, to the Ruin of Society; and to induce them, to shewing certain Marks of Fear and Obedience, towards the Deity; from whom natural Reason must teach them, *they received* ALL. Now instead of promoting these Views so salutary to Mankind, and consequently so honourable to their own Order, which had they pursued them, they must certainly have been every where esteemed publick Benefactors; they have on the contrary, continually employed themselves in inventing ridiculous Fables, to raise their own Authority, by imposing on the Vulgar; placed the whole of Religion, in costly, often in inhuman Sacrifices, rich Ornaments, pompous Processions, and unintelligible Mysteries; leaving the main Business as to teaching, both of Faith and Morals, to other Hands, such as the Philosophers, or the meaner Persons of their own Order, not yet initiated into the deeper Secrets, and interior Maxims of Priestly Policy.

WHOEVER pleases to peruse the beginning of * Monsieur *Barbeyrac's* celebrated

* This Piece has been Translated and Published singly, in a Twelve-Penny Pamphlet.

Preface to *Puffendorf*, will find this proved in a much fuller manner, than the Compass I have proposed in this Work will give me leave: Tho' I fancy what follows in the remaining Chapters, will shew that this is neither a groundless, nor malicious Charge; tho' it might be in some danger of passing for the latter, if we reflect on the hard usage, all who have thought freely, have constantly met with from the hands of the Priests. For my part, notwithstanding what has been said by my Correspondent before cited, and others, I cannot help placing * *Socrates* in the Calendar of Free-thinking Martyrs; and *Cicero*, *Pliny*, and many other great Men amongst the Antients, in the Number of the Confessors of the same Order; nay, even *Cato* himself, for his saying, *he wondered when two Augurs met, how they could refrain from laughing*, may be rank'd, in my Opinion, amongst that glorious Few, who have asserted the Cause of Truth and Liberty, against a prevailing Spirit of enthusiastick Error.

THAT my Readers may have a clear View of the Behaviour of these sacred Bigots, I have contentedly taken the trouble of turning over a very numerous Band of Authors †, from whom I have in as short and easy a manner as I could, extracted

* Vid. Mr. C--ll--ns's famous Account of *Free-Thinking*.

† Vid. *Archæologia Astica*, and its Supplement; with the other Authors mentioned hereafter.

the principal Branches of *Heathen*, *Jewish*, and *Christian* Priestcraft; beginning with those more known Climates of *Greece* and *Rome*, passing thro' the less apprehended Religions of the *East*, and ending with those it best becomes us to be acquainted with, the Behaviour of the Cl-gy of our own Country.



C H A P. III.

I Shall begin my Survey with *Greece*, or rather with *Athens*; for in remarking what Follies and Superstitions have been introduced by the Management of those who wait upon the Altar, it seems highly reasonable, to allow the first Rank to a People, otherwise famous both for Generosity and Virtue, and also for readiness of Wit, and solid Understanding. If these then could be made the Dupes of Priests; if such a Nation, who with regard to the Body of the People, were equally addicted to Thinking and Speaking with Accuracy on all Subjects: I say, if such could be drawn to entertain monstrous, and ridiculous Opinions of the Divine Power; if they fell into silly, mean, and irrational Methods of Adoration

ration; if superstitious foolish Notions, by the help of Priestcraft, were inculcated into such a People; how readily may we forgive, what we still see practised thro' the World? which tho' often as senseless, is yet propagated with greater Authority. When we turn our Eyes towards their religious Opinions and Practices, we shall be scarce able to suppose them the same People, who both in Arts and Arms, in Wisdom, and in Prowess, have left behind them Marks, to which future Ages glory to have reached; and are solicitous only to be thought to have attained the same Height, without having Vanity enough to hope an Excelling. Yet their Priests persuaded these, 'twas their Duty to worship the Sun, and even to put to Death those who refused*; but there was some Colour perhaps for this, where no brighter Revelation of the Divinity was known, than what flowed from his Presence. But what can be said for Deifying † *Bread*, or for building Temples, and paying Adoration to the Passions? Nay, *Epimenides* outdid this, and erected in *Athens* an Altar to *Impudence*; which some perhaps would have thought, a Power of more modern Apotheosis: *Necessity*, and the *Fatal Sisters* also, Tales which hardly deserve the Attention of a froward Child,

* Vid. *Plutarch* in his Life of *Pericles*.

† So *Clement Alexandrinus* interprets *Ceres*.

to whom his Nurse tells Stories to be quiet; passed, by the Mediation of the Priest, for sound Divinity upon them, as did the Theogony or Descendants of their Gods, whom *Homer* perhaps did not exceed in his Reckoning, when he called them three thousand; and not contented with so round a Number, they induced them to set up an Altar, even to the Unknown God; and brought their Minds at last to so wretched a pitch of Superstition, that they were ready to embrace the Doctrine of any God they heard of: So that when *Paul* * preached to them *Jesus* and the *Resurrection*, they took this *Resurrection* for a Deity. In their worshipping they were as consistent; for having sacrificed part of the Victim, they eat the rest, giving a full loose to their Inclinations, and like Clowns at *Christmas*, stuffed, drank, roared and rattled with great Devotion. Their Oracles or Divine Responses are a stale Theme, often examined and detected, not only by later Enemies, but also by the *Greeks* themselves, † when Things were recent, and would have been justified, if the Priests had either had Truth on their side, or Art enough to have baffled the Accusation. But to give one Instance from many, of the destructive Consequences of their pious Frauds, to the States in which

* Acts xvii. 18. *Iustin Martyr*.

† By *Demosthenes*, when he said they Phillipized.

they

they prevailed, I will just mention the Prosecution of *Alcibiades*, whose Misfortunes, tho' they ended in Death, were not greater with respect to himself, than fatal to his Country.

* He was a young Nobleman of *Athens*, of great Hopes and great Abilities, both for the Cabinet and the Camp: The *Athenians* having determined to invade *Sicily*, made choice of him (joined in Commission with two other more antient, and experienced Officers) for one of their Generals in this Expedition. A great Faction were his Enemies, and desirous to prevent his going; but the place he held in the People's Favour, render'd all their Endeavours vain; the superstitious Humour of the lower sort of the *Athenians*, was all the Resource they had. *Alcibiades* therefore they procured to be accused of having mocked certain *secret* Mysteries, and prophaned the Rites of the Goddesses *Ceres*, and *Proserpina*. That this might make the greater Eclat, the Statues of *Mercury*, which were placed throughout the Lanes and Streets of *Athens*, were defaced in one Night's space, and this Impiety also laid to the charge of the General. The Plot took, the People were exceedingly inflamed: *Alcibiades* was very earnest to justify himself, and desired there-

* *Plutarch*, in the Life of *Alcibiades*.

fore a speedy Trial ; his Enemies opposed it, and pretending the Exigence of Publick Affairs, would needs have him sail with the Forces under his Command, and leave this Prosecution to be determined when he came home. This being approved by the Publick, *Alcibiades* was forced to comply ; which was what the Faction aimed at : for being gone to *Sicily*, they took all imaginable Pains to inflame the Minds of the People, as to this pretended Prophanation and Sacrilege. Numbers (as in such Cases often happens) were apprehended, and tho' the Witnesses produced to prove it, were guilty of apparent Perjury, in affirming they saw the Faces of those who broke the Statues, by Moon-light, when all the City knew the Night was dark : yet so flaming was their Zeal, that the Blood of many was shed before it could be quenched ; and *Alcibiades*, like all popular Favourites, being less regarded now he was out of sight, the Charge was urged home against him, and his deriding the sacred Mysteries not only swelled into Blasphemy against Heaven, but also into a Conspiracy against the State. These specious Pretences had such an Effect on the Spirits of the superstitious *Athenians*, that they immediately sent a Galley to bring him home, in order to abide their Sentence ; but he retiring from them into other Parts of *Greece*, they condemned him

him unheard to loss of Life, and forfeiture of Estate and Goods. Upon the News of which, *Alcibiades* said to one of his Friends, "Tho' they have condemned me to Death, yet they shall find that I am alive". And entering immediately into the Measures of their Enemies, fought from thence forward for nothing but Revenge: Which tho' it can never be justified, yet the *Athenians*, as if they intended to furnish him with the fullest Excuse, added to what they had already done against him, * by commanding their Priests and Priestesses to curse him with publick and bitter Execrations: which the pious Herd did accordingly, excepting only one Nun, who seem'd alone to have a just Notion of Religion, and the Duty of Sacred Orders; by answering, That her Function obliged her to Bless, not to Curse, and therefore absolutely refused it.

We have now seen how far Religion, subservient to Faction, could carry things. Let us pursue this Tract a little farther, and observe the Consequence: *Alcibiades* wrought so many Evils in return of his Banishment, that the *Athenians* were everywhere overthrown, and their Nobles laying hold of this Opportunity, to seize the Government into their own Hands, even the

* The Resemblance between the Behaviour of this Faction, and some of later Date, may perhaps tempt some to think it a Parallel; but if they turn to *Plutarch*, they will be convinced.

City itself became in Danger. *Alcibiades* seeing the extream Necessity, to which his Country was reduced, relented, and joining their Fleet, did many great Actions in her Service, insomuch as her Affairs at last became again in a prosperous Condition. Upon which the giddy headed People, elevated with his Success, repealed the Proceedings against *Alcibiades*; and their Priests at command, to shew how free they can make with Heaven, take off their solemn Imprecations, and throw their written Prayers against him, into the Sea. But here also was another singular Dissenter, and as the *Nun* thought it incongruous with her Profession, to *Curse*; so the *Chief Priest* or * *Bishop*, on this occasion believed it inconsistent with his Office to *Absolve* him. However the old Leaven quickly fermented again, and as soon as *Alcibiades* was departed with his Fleet, the Mob influenced by an Accident which happen'd to one of his Commanders, again condemned him: on which followed in a few Years the total Ruin of their Affairs, and even the Reduction of *Athens*, under the Power of the *Lacedemonians*, who set up in it that Form of Government, since famous by the Name of the Thirty Tyrants.

BEHOLD the Effects of *Superstition* and *Priestcraft*! which too often occasion such

* I would not have the Word *Bishop* thought an unwarrantable Translation, since others have so render'd it before me.

great

great Revolutions; which indeed scarce ever happen, but where the Cl--gy promote them, either in the Shape of *Actors* or of *Tools*. But we have dwelt long enough on the Affairs of *Greece*, to shew that there is no Nation, however learned or polite, but must be in danger, if their Subjects grow Superstitious, and have their Humours easily wrought on by their Cl--gy.



CHAP. IV.

THE Virtues of the antient *Romans* were so many, and so well known, that it were a superfluous Labour, in a Work like this, to dwell at all in relating them: However, even from the Institution of her State, *Priestcraft* had a much larger Share in the Direction of their Affairs, than one would imagine from the manner in which their Government is usually represented. * *Romulus* their Founder was himself an *Augur*, and like most of the antient Institutors of Governments, palmed himself upon the People, for one who easily could foretell the Decrees of Fate, an Artifice of

* *Plutarch's Life of Romulus, Livy, and other Authors.*

singular Use, in building up, or in pulling down a State. Yet how much his Royal Skill in Fortune-telling availed him, is evident from his Death, or rather his Departure; for having assumed an absolute Power to himself, in prejudice to the Patricians or Nobles, they, when he enter'd the Council-Room, seized him, and after slaying him, carried away part of his Body under each of their long Robes, and prevented thereby the Possibility (at least) of an immediate Discovery. However, the People murmuring at so extraordinary an Accident as the Loss of their Prince, had recourse directly to Miracles and Priestcraft; for producing one *Proclus*, he swore, that *Romulus* appeared to him in a Dream, and told him, that being now a God, it would be expedient for his Subjects to worship him under the Name of *Quirinus*. *Numa* and his Institutions, have been already mentioned, and it would be both tedious and superfluous, to dwell longer on particular Points of their superstitious Follies; it is fitter that we observe in general, how the Colleges of * *Augurs* and † *Pontiffs* were possessed of Immunities, which speak the true Spirit of *Priestcraft*. The first, had an indelible Character, of which no Crime however flagrant could deprive them; the latter were inde-

* Alex. Gen. dier. l. 5. c. 19.

† Rosin. Antiq. l. 3. c. 22.

pendent of the State, and unaccountable for their Transactions even to the Senate. The *Augurs* also, on pretence of some Defect in the Ceremonies, or thro' want of an auspicious Token of their Creation, often took upon them to declare void the Election even of the highest Magistrates; which is so well known to every one who has read the *Roman History*, that Instances are needless. As to the Morals of their Priests, we find *Pontifica Cena*, which as it has the same Signification, had doubtless its Original from the same Cause with the old *English* saying, 'Tis a Feast for an Abbot, and is a good Authority for our modern Persons having coming Stomachs. The Rites of the * *Bona Dea*, were an odd sort of Worship, as the Deity to whom they were sacred was an odd sort of Goddess; raised (as some Authors say) to this celestial Dignity by *Faunus* her Husband in a tender Fit, for having whip'd her to Death with Rods of Myrtle, only for having caught her a little Tipsy. † But the Priests and Ceremonies belonging to *Cybele*, give one a farther Idea of *Roman Priestcraft*, they play'd such scandalous Pranks under the Umbrage of Devotions for their Goddess, that it was one of the most infamous Terms of Reproach amongst the *Romans* to call any one a Servant of

* Alex. Gen. dier. l. 6. c. 8.

† Pom. Lat. de Sacerd. Rofin. Antiq. l. 3. c. 27.

that Divinity. * Nay, their Priests could also mislead the Minds of these so magnanimous People, into yet more detestable Acts, and upon a sudden Expedition of their Enemies, persuaded them into offering up human Sacrifices, and that in the most cruel manner, *viz.* by burying the poor Wretches alive †. 'Tis a little extraordinary therefore, to hear some of the Christian, and even Protestant Cl-gy, urging that Respect paid by the *Romans* to their Priests, as a fit Precedent for our Behaviour towards them; when, as is shewn in the foregoing part of this Chapter, their whole Religion was a political Forgery, invented to curb the Minds of the People, and either to inflame or discourage them, as they found occasion; a plain Reason, why Patricians or Noblemen assumed the sacerdotal Character, in order to keep those Mysteries absolutely from the Knowledge of the Commons; and we see they begun at last to be so well acquainted with its being their Design, that as soon as their Struggles gave them an Ingress to Offices, they intruded themselves also into the Priesthood. And to sum up all on this Head, I must remark to my Readers, that these ridiculous, lewd, and barbarous Methods of worshipping the supream Power, having stirr'd up many of the Philosophers

* *Plutarch*, in the Life of *Paulus Æmilius*. † A Discourse on the Institution, Dignities and Immunities of the Priesthood.

to treat the vulgar Religion with contempt, yet it is very unfair to charge them with Atheism, since there is so wide a Distance, between Superstition and Devotion, and the Notions of the more ordinary sort of People have been, and in many Places still are so gross, both with regard to the Nature and Manner of their Adoration of that infinite Being, that it is far more probable a Man should be disgusted with them, from a sublime Idea of the Almighty, than from a mean one: And in this I agree in my Sentiments, with a very great and learned * Writer of the Church of *England*, whose Works and whose Memory, do equal Honour to his Country, and his Order.



C H A P. V.

HAVING thus taken a View of † Priestcraft, in those two famous Governments, from whence the Palm of Empire was transferred to *Europe*; let us then, to compleat the Prospect, turn our Eyes towards *Asia*, and the *Indies*, and see the Reverence Priests received there; and the

* *Stillingfleet's* Or. Sacr.

† Tho' much more might have been added, yet the View is however clear.

Ground on which such Reverence was founded. * Of all the Nations yet shrouded under the Dark Cloud of Paganism, *China* has least of Incongruity or Ridiculousness in their Sentiments of Religion. The Followers of *Confucius*, have not only excellent moral Precepts, for the Direction of their Lives, but they attain also to elevated and sublime Ideas of that almighty Power, in whom we live, and move, and have our Being. The *Bonzes* however, even here find amongst the Great, Vulgar, and the Small, a numerous Train of Disciples. These *Bonzes*, are Priests of the Idol *Fo*, and the main Article of their Doctrine is Transmigration; by a dextrous Management of which, they raise as much as the Popish Priests do from Purgatory: For possessing the Minds of their Votaries, that they are able to tell them, into what Animal their Soul shall at their Death pass: they next persuade them, that their Prayers are of such Efficacy, as to procure a Change, in case the Creature, they persuade them they are to animate, be displeasing to them: And these Petitions to their Divinity, they are sure to vend at a considerable Rate. Nay, they go farther than this; for if their Prince, or Patron, lose a beloved Mistress, immediately they

* *Le Compte*, and others.

pretend to inform him where her Soul animates a beautiful Slave, who, tho' at never so great a Distance, the Prince instantly dispatches somebody to purchase; and the sharp and discerning *Bonze*, meets both with Praise, and Reward. In *Japan*, their Priests, under the same Name of *Bonzes*, instil into the People a Notion of the Necessity of auricular Confession; and having a Temple situated on a Rock, they chuse the Edge or Descent of it, as the most proper Place for examining their Penitents; and if they in any degree doubt the Sincerity of their Confession, down they go headlong, *in terrorem*, to teach others the Art of speaking out for the future. They have a Custom also every new Moon, § to bring a Virgin into the Temple, which is splendidly adorned with Gold Lamps, the Lights of which, being suddenly put out, something in human Shape, comes in and embraces the Woman, who often goes away impregnated; but whether by the Deity, or his Priest, I must leave to the Conjecture of my Readers. The Talapoins of *Siam*, are, in all appearance, the best Set of Pagan Priests that are still existing: 'Tis true, they are strongly bent to Pride and Covetousness, two Sins that are deadly Foes to the Clergy; and which seem therefore in all

§ Such Rites are mentioned by Travellers in other Nations as well as in *Japan*.

Times, and in all Places, to have stuck close to their Order; but as to meddling in matters of State, searching Mens private Consciences, or riding the People too hard, under pretence of Dues, or of Alms, these are matters, which I don't find they are ever taxed with *. They pretend however, to prodigious Sanctity, and in virtue of that to great Immunities, which are constantly allowed them by their Prince, tho' he keeps a strict Eye over them, because he conceives a great part of his Subjects might be induced to take up the same Life; considering the Laziness, in which, under pretence of minding only sacred Things, they live. For this reason he takes care to have them critically examined, as to their Knowledge of the *Daily* Language; in which, all that relates to their Religion is written: And if on such Examination, they are found ignorant, they are immediately dismissed from their Office, as *Talapoins*, † and obliged to get their Bread in some way or other, which they understand better. But perhaps we may meet with something more venerable in the *Bramins* §, who are indeed an antient and famous Sect, not of Priests only, but Philosophers; and one great Pillar of their Reputation is, some of them burning

* It is one of their Rules not to beg daily at the same House.

† Sometimes 1000 at once have been dismissed.

§ Referred to by Parson *Betty*, in his Sermon.

them-

themselves, before *Alexander* the Great, in order to fill a Place, whenever a Calendar shall be drawn up, in favour of the *Martyrs* to *Vanity*. The *Bramins*, of modern Date, preach to the People in an obscure mystical manner, macerate themselves with grievous Penances, and pretend to wonderful Trances, and Revelations *. I intended to have dropp'd my Disquisitions into the Oriental Priestcraft here, but reflecting on the profound Reverence paid to their Holy Men amongst the *Turks*, I thought it might not be amiss to take a short Sketch of their Religion also: And that I may in a few Words explain it, give me leave to borrow some Lines from † Mr. *Osborn* upon this Subject. " Their Priests, (says he) " like Juglers, carry the Coal of Zeal only in their Mouths, not being heated themselves with what they go about to inflame others; suffering their Threats and Promises to rise no higher, nor fall no lower, than suits with the politick Reaches of their Prince." From whence this judicious Author, who both wrote as well as spoke, more like a *Free-Thinker* than any since, seems to have proved the Truth of his preceding Maxim, viz. " That a false Religion doth contribute " more to Safety than Atheism; and that a

* *Vid.* Dr. *Cogan's* Letter concerning them in *Philosophical Transactions*.
 † *Osborn's* Work, p. 277. Ed. 1673.

“ Clergy is of excellent Concernment,
 “ provided they keep close in their Doc-
 “ trine, to Reasons of State, not to be
 “ brought about but through the Mediation
 “ of their own Interest, by nothing so easi-
 “ ly biaſſed, as good Livings, &c.” Such
 is truly the Principles, ſuch the means of
 acquiring, the Veneration of the many in
 theſe Countries, and therefore ’tis betray-
 ing their own Interests, for our Cl-
 gy to preach up Doctrines which ſtand in need of
 ſuch Examples. Do they pretend to ſuch
 Gifts, as theſe Sun-burnt Parsons? will
 they endure the Torments the *Bonzes* put
 themſelves to, in order to excite Admi-
 ration? will they undergo, the almoſt in-
 credible Penances, of the *Bramins* to beget
 Wonder? Nay ſhould they do all this,
 they muſt ſuperadd the *Mahometan* Policy,
 and found their high Pretenſions, on at leaſt
 an additional Revelation; for what they
 produce from the Goſpel, affords but an in-
 different Title, even to the loweſt of their
 Claims. Mr. *Bowman*, in his late celebra-
 ted Sermon, has inſinuated that the pious
 Frauds, and bold Pretences of the Pagan
 Prieſthood, kept up their Religion as long
 as it exiſted; but when that Propoſition
 comes to be examined, I think it will prove
 the contrary; ſince nothing could give ſo
 great an Advantage to any deſign of de-
 ſtroying it, as a Detection of their ſacer-
 dotal

dotal Impostures, which, whenever the State permitted to be freely examined, must of necessity happen, and consequently cure the Bulk of the People of their Superstition; and doubtless this sort of arguing was of great use to the Primitive Christians in all their Disputes against the Heathens.



C H A P. VI.

HITHERTO we have dealt only with feigned and sophisticated Revelations, let us now proceed to the Consideration, how far Priestcraft is capable of damaging a true Religion; and of weakening, or as the Scripture phraseth it, rendering of none Effect, Laws promulgated by the Almighty. The remaining part of the Letter, which I quoted in my first Chapter, will fully explain this, though the prejudice conceived by its Author, against the modern Free-Thinkers, is equally great and unreasonable.

“THE Disputes, which have, as you
 “rightly observe, been kept up throughout
 “all Ages, and in all Religions, between
 “those who are for exalting Priests, into
 “a lesser or inferiour kind of Deities,
 “and those who would have them pass for
 “ a

“ a Tribe of Spiritual Empiricks, and Ec-
 “ clestical Juglers, is by no instance so
 “ perfectly to be explained, as by compa-
 “ ring the *Pharisees* and *Sadducees* a-
 “ mongst the *Jews* *, who were (without
 “ straining the modern Acceptation of the
 “ Words) the first Bigots, and the latter
 “ Deists; or, if you will, Free-Thinkers.
 “ But let me first premise to you, that
 “ God’s Mission by Prophets was closed,
 “ before these Sects appeared, who making
 “ use, as they termed it, of their Reason,
 “ took up the following opposite Opinions.
 “ The *Pharisee* defended the Traditions
 “ of the Elders, giving them at least an
 “ equal Authority with the written Law.
 “ They affected great Appearance of Sancti-
 “ ty, in Gesture, Garb, Speech, and Ap-
 “ pearance: And though there were Lay-
 “ men of that Persuasion, yet they were
 “ such as made the Church their chief Care,
 “ or at least took every Precaution to seem
 “ as if they did. They were extremely
 “ precise in the most trivial Points, wash’d
 “ themselves frequently, made long Pray-
 “ ers, and look’d on their Sect, as if they
 “ were a separate and chosen People. In
 “ a word, they held the Principles of the
 “ old Puritans, in respect of their private
 “ Character, and yet went as far as the old

* For this Account the Learned may compare it with *Cu-*
zens, or *Josephus*; or Dr. *Lewis’s* Republick of the *Hebrews*.

“ Prelatists, with regard to Ceremonies in
 “ the Church, as if in love with Superlatives,
 “ and delighting only in Extrems. The
 “ *Sadducees* again, whom our late (Free-
 “ thinking) Authors express a great Esteem
 “ for, were of a pliant Religion, which did
 “ not much bridle their Passions: They
 “ profess’d a Belief of the Five Books of
 “ *Moses* only; they absolutely rejected all
 “ Tradition; nay, even Consequences drawn
 “ from Scripture; and therefore because the
 “ Resurrection is not clearly taught in the
 “ *Pentateuch*, they deny’d it, with all its
 “ dependant Doctrines. These Sects, or
 “ rather Heresies, long distracted the Jewish
 “ Church, *Sadducees*, notwithstanding their
 “ Opinions, arising even at the high Priest-
 “ hood, which occasioned continual Heart-
 “ burnings, and religious Differences, creating
 “ then, as well as now, Parties in the Com-
 “ monwealth, which never cease contending,
 “ ’till one or both are brought to utter Ru-
 “ in*.” The closest Approaches to which
 could not stifle these intestine Struggles in
 the Jewish State. Our Author has indeed
 shewn the Event of Priestly Tyranny, but
 methinks his Draught of the Pharisee is a
 little too much softened; give me leave there-
 fore to add, that their usual way of passing
 through the Streets, was with the Strut of

* As appears in the Siege of *Jerusalem*.

a *Spaniard*, and the Pace of an Elephant, that the People might imagine them in a deep Contemplation; shutting their Eyes, that they might not see a Woman; and now and then hitting themselves against a Post, 'till the Blood gushed; with a stiff Cap on, to prevent turning their Heads when they made use of their Eyesight, any way but strait forwards. Were not these vast Signs of Piety and infallible Marks of true Religion? and would not the Nick-Name of *Karaim*, (Biblers, or adhering only to Scriptures) given by way of Reproach to the Sadducees, be full as applicable from the Papists to the Followers of the Reformation, which is founded only on the sacred Writings, and relies not on Tradition?



CHAP. VII.

WE are now come down to an *Æra* better known, and to times in which Opinions that more nearly concern us, were clearer; let us examine then the Progress of Priestcraft, (I mean the Craft of Priests to assume unreasonable Authority to themselves) since Men have been under the Dispensation of the Gospel. When we dip into the
Book

Books, which contain the Principles of those numerous Congregations, who though they profess Faith in Christ, yet embrace Sentiments very different from one another; we shall immediately observe, that Primitive Belief, and Primitive Practices are still pretended, none caring to own their Doctrines new, but chusing rather to profess them as if revived. If then so great Deference is due to those early Ages of Christianity, how much more to the earliest, when the Church was alone directed by an infallible Guide, whose Life was without Sin, and his Precepts without Error? Yet what Tract can we perceive, what Foundation can we discover, by which the *Roman* Hierarchy of Pope, Cardinals, &c. should seem the Successors of Christ, and his Apostles; or the Opinions, Ceremonies, and Priviledges of the Papists, bear even a resemblance to the Faith taught by *JESUS*? Who, when they read that our Saviour refused the Title of Good, saying, there is none good but One, can bring himself to believe, that the Stile of Holiness, Vicar of God, nay, and even of God on Earth, can lawfully be given unto any Professor of Christianity. To expose, or but barely to mention all the Errors of Popery, would require a much larger Scope than the whole of my Book; it is necessary therefore,

It is apparent that nothing can be more opposite to Christianity than unnecessary Forms and Ceremonies.

G

that

that I dwell on this particular Point, *viz.* that the *Behaviour* of the Clergy together, with their *Traditions*, had the worst Effect imaginable on the Popish Church, and was the Cause both of its Corruption, and that Diminution it received by the Reformation, as in the succeeding Chapter I shall shew, and that the same Causes (and probably no other) may be able to overturn that at present by Law established in these Kingdoms.

THE first Charge on this Priesthood is, that its Members have constantly affected Power, and Authority, things which their High Priest JESUS, in express Terms disclaimed: And for the Affectation of which, (together with Place and Preheminency) he treats the Pharisee with so much Indignation. Nay, nothing appears more conspicuously, throughout the Gospel, than a Desire in Christ, of rooting out the Seeds of Pride and Ambition, which from the Frailty of human Nature, he saw springing up in the Breasts of his Disciples. Does he not tell them, that his Kingdom (and consequently their Endeavours) belong not to this World? and have we not seen a *Protestant* Bishop reviled, and ill treated, for affirming that he spoke Truth? Did he not instead of installing *Peter* (as the Papists pretend) absolutely condemn all disputing for Place amongst his Apostles? Did he not yield Obedience

Obedience to the Civil Power, and even comply with the established Ceremonies of the Jewish Religion? How then came Episcopal Government into the Church? why certainly it was in compliance to the then Constitution of the State. Christ's Amity was propagated throughout the Dominions of an extensive Empire; the primitive Christians therefore, adopted, or rather imitated the Civil Policy, and set up Directors of the Church with like Jurisdiction: But when that Empire became Christian, the Bishops were ever contending for new Additions of Power, and higher Exaltations in Title; 'till the Emperor *Mauritius* gave the supreme Stile of *Universal Bishop*, to the then Bishop, * or (if you will) *Patriarch of Constantinople*. He of *Rome*, like an honest Man, declared such Pride Antichristian and Abominable. *Mauritius* was murdered first, and then succeeded by *Phocas*, in every Sense a Paracide: The Bishop of *Constantinople* (who was probably a Christian) detested the Fact; but the Successor of the beforementioned Bishop of *Rome*, abetted the Tyrant, and the Traitor; and from him received that Title, which his Predecessor, had declared Antichristian. Now to see into what goodly Hands this Power has fallen, one need but turn to that List of

* The Title of Patriarch was invented and bestowed on five Churches, and confirmed by a general Council.

Popes whom *Bellarmin* confesses to have gone in a long Train to the Devil. What Violence, what Wars, what Bloodshed the Papal Usurpations have cost Christendom, may be seen from every Branch of History that concerns it. And that this Power appears altogether unwarrantable, even to the Papists themselves, is evident from the Design of the *French* and *Spanish* Prelates in the Council of *Trent*; who endeavoured, by asserting the divine Right of Bishops, to restrain it: But the Pope pouring in a sufficient Number of titular *Italians* *, they (like the new made Lords) paid the Acknowledgment for their Dignities, by out-voting it.

As to the Administration of Government, when in the Hands of the Cl-gy, or even when they have but a Share in it, Reflection and Experience will soon give us a Taste on't. Did not the Priests conspire against our Saviour, did they not hire *Judas* to betray him, did they not afterwards inspire the Mob with Cruelty, and through their Mouths bellow out *Crucify*? Did not they load themselves with the Weight of the Blood of God? And when *Judas* repented, and brought again the Money, complaining they had seduced him into delivering Innocency to Slaughter, did they not

*-*Vid.* History of the Council of *Trent*.

reply,

reply, What is that to us? Have not Christian Priests quarrell'd with, anathamiz'd, and excommunicated not only one another, but their Sovereigns? Did not the Council of *Constance*, to indulge their Thirst of Blood, * murder *John Huss*, tho' the publick Faith had been pledged for his Security? Even at this Day, Are not the two Dominions of *Rome* and *Malta*, the most wicked, profligate, and abandon'd parts of the Earth? And as to our own Island, doth not our Records shew, that it never fell into so deplorable a State of Iniquity, as when the Popish Clergy had most Power here; as at the time of the *Danish* Invasion, when they were in the Zenith of their Dominion, they employed themselves in Broils and Battles, with one another, being contaminated with all manner of Vices; and the poor People, in the mean while, were left so very ignorant, that they could not so much as say the Lord's Prayer, or the Creed, in their Mother Tongue †. — But 'tis time to throw a Veil over so shocking a Scene; and if it were possible to bury it in Oblivion.

NEXT to the love of Power, was the love of Money conspicuous in the *Romish* Clergy. Indeed this seems to be of a very early Growth, and like a Tare, which was let fall in Seed time. The Apostles were so

* The History of the Council of *Constance*.

† *Antiq. Eccl. Britan.* p. 22.

cautious in this respect, that they instituted an Order (Deacons) for the due Care and Preservation of what was bestowed on the Church, which, it is agreed on all Hands, was distributed by the primitive Christians, with equal Charity, and Exactness: But so earnest were the Priests, in persuading their Hearers towards giving, that the Church of *Rome*, *A. D.* 220. became so very rich, that the Emperor *Decius*, was tempted to endeavour a Seizure; and the same Views, says the judicious Father *Paul**, excited the succeeding Emperors, to persecute the Christians, even till the Death of the Emperor *Commodus*. As the Churches became rich, the Clergy became so much more at ease; so that some of them, not contented with a Subsistence in common, began to affect living separate; and to have each their Allowance paid them in Money. But Disorders encreasing, the Bishops in a short time, thought fit to cease the usual Distribution to the Poor; and being possessed of the Gifts of the Faithful, reserved them wholly to their own Use. Triumphant thus in the Spoils of the Church, which by Usury they endeavoured to improve, and in all their Actions shewed the utmost Repugnancy to the Doctrines of Christ: Which is observed by St. *Cyprian*, and interpreted by him to be the Cause of

* Father *Paul's* Treatise of Benefices.

the *Decian* Persecution*. As yet however, no real Estates were given to the Church; but how soon after they also were acquired, is evident from their being confiscated, under the Emperors *Dioclesian* and *Maximilian*. And when Peace was again restored, the Clergy, far from desisting in their pursuit of Gain, were continually pressing Folks, by Terrors, or persuading them by fair Promises, to leave all to the Church, even to the prejudice of their Heirs and Families; a Practice St. *Augustin* fully declares against; though it has been notoriously continued even to this Day. As they were thus desirous to acquire, so they were as tenacious, in respect to whatever they possessed, and let the Exigencies of State be ever so urging, maintain'd they were, exempt from all Contributions; though they could not be ignorant, that the Exemption they pretended, arose only from the Revenues being formerly appropriated to the Poor; and consequently Levies upon them would have been unreasonable; as now that Cause was ceased, it became both lawful and reasonable to re-assume them. Things being in this State, every understanding Person must perceive, how little Charity there was in still adding to the Riches of the Church, or much more properly to the Riches of the

† *Vid.* History of the Council of *Trent*.

Clergy.

Clergy. *Philip de Comines* therefore, makes a very just Observation on the Bounty of *Lewis XI.* † when he says, *He gave much to the Church, but he had better have given less; for he took from the Poor, to give to those that had no need.* But alas! such Reasonings were not likely to prevail, when those who directed Mens Consciences, and for whom Veneration is impressed upon us from our Cradle, neglecting the proper Work of their Ministry, minded nothing but how to preach up the Necessity of bestowing largely on their Order; which they found a Thousand Pretences to do. And first as to Tythes, about the time of *Charlemaign*, the Clergy scarce mentioned any thing else in their Sermons: And as *Father Paul* tells us, they insisted not only on Predial Tythes, but on Personal also; as of Hunting, and the Soldiers Pay, Nay, the Canonists have gone yet farther, and affirmed that even the Poor ought to give the Tenth Penny of their Begging; and common Women the like part of their infamous Gain. These Tythes were assigned to the Ministers, in consideration of the Services they performed, in teaching the Word of God, and administering the Sacraments: Yet because some charitable Persons, having out of meer Bounty given at the Burials of

† In his Memoirs.

their Relations, and on the Administration of Sacraments, the Cl--gy soon took occasion to turn it into a Debt, and refused to perform the Functions of their Priesthood, without its being paid them†. Nor need we wonder at these, and Multitudes of other such like Instances, which might be produced to the same purpose, if we consider how far the Cl--gy were encouraged by their Superiors, in such Exactions; and especially by the Example of their Sovereign Infallible Lords the Popes, who not contented with those prodigious Revenues, which Prescription had at least given the Colour of Right to, were yet continually encroaching upon the Office; and especially upon the Power of bestowing Benefices to others. As no part of *Europe* suffered more deeply from these Exactions, it will not be amiss to mention one Instance from our own History, which will give us a just Idea of the righteous Infallibility of the *Roman* Pontiffs.

IN the Year 1253, Pope *Innocent IV.* commanded *Robert* Bishop of *Lincoln*, a Man eminent for Purity of Life, and the regular Discharge of his Function, to confer a Benefice on a *Genoese* (one of his Holiness's Countrymen) contrary to the Canons. The Bishop wrote him a most respectful Answer to these Letters, representing in

† About the Year *A. D.* 800 these Disputes began.

the strongest, yet mildest Terms, how unjust and unreasonable a Demand it was, and why he would not comply with it. The Pope, at the Receipt of this Answer, flew in a violent Passion; he called the Bishop, an old doting presumptuous Tool, and swore by *St. Peter* and *Paul*, he had a mind to punish him so severely, that all the World might take warning by him. Cardinal *Ægidius*, a *Spaniard*, representing to him how dangerous the Attempt might be, of such a Procedure, against a Prelate of so great and just a Reputation, the Pope paused a little, and began to think of a silent Revenge, when in the Interim the Bishop died, retaining his Opinions to the last. The Pope, on the News of his Decease, ordered a Process against him, to take him out of his Grave; and sent it to the King to execute it. But the Night following, the Bishop appeared to the Pope, dressed in his Pontifical Robes, and reproaching him for persecuting his Memory, struck him with his Cross on his Side, which awakened the Pope, with an excessive Pain, that continued upon him 'till his Death, (which happen'd not long after) never suffering him to enjoy Quiet, either Night or Day *.

THIS is the same Pope, who, on his Death Bed, observing his Relations and

* *Matth. Paris*, in the Life of *Henry III.*

Friends weeping and lamenting, said, * *Why complain ye? Do I not leave you all Rich? What would ye desire more?* Behold the Value of Wealth in the Eye of an Infallible Pontiff!

THE last Charge I shall mention here, against the *Romish Priesthood*, is, That for the sake of Power and Wealth, they have made use of pious Frauds, and adulterated that Gospel they would be thought to preach. To prove this, would be to transcribe the whole Doctrines and Practices of Popery: What uses have they not made of what is called, *the Power of the Keys*, in order to acquire Power to themselves, and triumph over the Civil Magistrate! What immense Sums has their Fable of *Purgatory* and the Pretence of *Masses* brought them in! and what excessive Gains did they acquire by *Crusadoes* and *Indulgencies*; 'till the Cheat became so gross, that *Luther* by detecting it shook the Basis of their Political Foundation, and by unraveling the Clue of Papal Iniquity, made way for reviving a *Worship* consisting only in Spirit and in Truth, and therefore properly enough called the REFORMATION!

* Quid p'angitis miseri? Nonne vos omnes divites relinquo? Quid amplius exigitis? *Matthew Paris.*



C H A P. VIII.

BEING arrived thus low, one would have thought the Progress of Priestcraft had well nigh reached its End; but the fairest Hopes have sometimes been disappointed: However, in the remaining Part of my Work, I shall stray as little from Home as possible, and with the utmost Impartiality trace the last Footsteps of my Subject.

'Tis questionless, that to a Priest, *viz.* *Cranmer*, we owe the first Countenance, and consequently the Establishment, of what is called the *Protestant Faith in England*; for 'tis morally certain, but for him, *Henry* the VIIIth would have been so far from shewing any favour to the Reformed, that he would have proceeded against them with the utmost Severity, agreeable both to the Vehemence of his Temper, and the Principles he had imbibed. The Constancy of that Prelate's Friendship for the Lord *Cromwell*, when in the worst Circumstances*; the hand he had in asserting the

* Memorial of ABp. *Cranmer*, Book 2. Chap. 1. P. 141.

King's Supremacy, in the Days of *Edward* the VIth; and the manner of his Death; may doubtless entitle him to the Character of a *Priest* without *Craft*.

THE Behaviour of the Cl-gy, under the Reign of Queen *Elizabeth*, was very tolerable; and if their Zeal against *Puritans* ran too high, 'tis certain they met with great Provocation. I am conscious some of our weak Brethren (I mean Free-Thinkers) will be displeased with this Concession, from an erroneous Opinion, that the *Puritans* maintained a Cause, nearly resembling their own; absolutely opposite to Priestcraft, and every way conformable to Reason. But what pity 'tis they are mistaken! Alas! the Puritans, and Kirk of *Scotland*, both assert a Divine Right in their Spiritual Affairs, in stronger Terms than the Bishops by half; and so prevalent is this Holy Craft among them, that to this Day they defend the Independency of the Kirk, upon the State, and have often been inflamed to Rebellion, in favour of King *J-fus*. Nay so lofty were they grown in the time of King *James* the Ist, that before he left *Scotland*, they were much more Masters of his Kingdom than he; of which because it so strongly bespeaks their Spirit of Priestcraft, I cannot forbear mentioning one Instance.

It seems they had bellowed so loud from their Pulpits against the * *French* Embassadors, that their Excellencies thought it prudent to retire. The King desired the Magistrates of *Edinburgh* to feast them before they returned, owning at the same time that himself durst not do it: The Magistrates dutifully complied with the King's Request, and appointed the Monday following for their Entertainment. The Ministry hereupon to shew their meek Spirit, proclaimed a Fast; and because the Magistrates and Nobility in obedience to their Sovereign, that Day attended the Embassadors, they pursued them with the Censures of the Church, and were hardly prevailed upon to refrain from thundering out the last, and severest Sentence of *Excommunication*. A Behaviour, as little to be justified, from the Language of the Gospel, or the Practice of the Apostles, as the furious Bulls and Antichristian Censures of the *Roman* Pope!

Priestcraft in the beginning of the seventeenth Century, raised its Head again; for tho' many of the Bishops in King *James's* Reign, and some even in that of his Son, retained humble and moderate Opinions; yet the Pedantry of the first, and the pertinacious Byass of the latter, towards aggran-

* B. Brumhall's *Fair Warning*, p. 27.

dizing

dizing the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, gave great Opportunities to Men of restless and aspiring Spirits, for endeavouring at a resumption of those Powers, which the *Reformation* made by the State in *England*, had wisely cut off from the Church. Such undoubtedly was the End proposed in the Vehemency of *Laud's* Proceedings against all who gainsay'd him, the Zeal of the Dignified Clergy for reviving Ceremonies, the Intemperance and Indiscretion of * Bishop *Wren*; as for instance, in churching a Man who had escaped tossing by a Cow, was directed with the same view of building up again the Walls of this spiritual *Jerico*: which, considering the Unnaturalness of the Attempt, upon Protestant Principles, and the general Aversion of the Times, human Prudence might easily have foreseen the Event. Yet the Confusions, which immediately followed, and that Ruin which the Cl--gy brought upon themselves, gave stronger Instances of the Danger of Priestcraft, than any that have happen'd before or since in this Island. The Effect that a pretence to Sanctity and Revelation, attended with a voluble Tongue, and insinuating Cant, has upon vulgar Minds and shallow Understandings, became now a Maxim commonly un-

* See the Articles exhibited against him by the House of Commons.

derstood,

derstood, and as commonly practised: under Colour of Religion, a general Enthusiasm prevailed, not only destructive of the Form and outward Appearance of a *Church*, but of * Morality also; and in fine, the Bulk of the Nation might very fitly be divided into two Parties, those who deluded under a Mask of Piety, and those who were led away by their Delusions. I know I speak in a new Language, but 'tis the Language of a *Free-Thinker*, who if he dislikes the Tyranny of Priests in La--n Sl--ves, abhors much more the same Subjection to a Soul-saving Butcher, who would be sure to preach unintelligible Doctrine, and treat in a severer manner (when in his Power) whoever should presume to differ from him, under a Pretence of Thinking freely.

THE Bulk of the Superior Cl--gy, during the long Reign of *Charles II.* were Men whom all sides confessed, to have had great Parts and Learning; however Priestcraft was not extinguished, the Government had Reasons for favouring the Power of Church-Men, and they in their turns preached up so unlimited an Obedience to the State, that the People apprehended them under a sort of Compact, to have shared the Civil Rights

* Vid. *Gangrene*, in two Parts, 4to. Written by *Thomas Edwards* Minister of the Gospel; and Printed A.D. 1646.

of the Subject between them. † However, in the next Reign, the *Priesthood* behaved in a manner so agreeable to the Christian Scheme, so becoming Protestant Preachers, and so consonant to the Principles of Free-Thinkers; that it would be Partiality in the highest Degree, to charge those with Priestcraft, who ventured *all*, and suffered *much*, for the sake of *Liberty*, and the *Constitution*. As to those *Prelates*, &c. who thought it inconsistent with their Consciences, to comply with the Form of *Government*, settled after the *Revolution*, tho' I cannot agree they thought right, yet I see not how it can be denied, but that they thought *Freely*; especially when we consider, how many *Thousands per Annum* their Free-Thinking cost them. For the Priestcraft of King *William's* B—ps, and Cl—gy I can say little; but it seems to have flourished extraordinarily, under the Auspice of his Successor, our late gracious Sovereign Lady Queen ANNE: We all know how much Noise the *Church* made in her Days, and what an Outcry there was of its Danger; what voluminous Pieces were daily usher'd into the World with pompous Titles, in favour of what was called the *Jus Divinum* of their Sacred Orders. But those At-

† See the History of the Desertion, 4to. By a Person of Quality. Printed 1689.

tempts, which occasioned great Tumults, and disturbed the Quiet of an easy and excellent Administration, very happily proved abortive: Which whether it did not redound more to the Service of the Clergy, than to the State, is not easy to be determined. For whenever, thro' the Bigottry, Indolence, or Policy of any succeeding Prince, the Cl—gy shall arrive at such a Stretch of Power and Authority (as many who know not the true Interest of their Order, seem to wish); I, tho' no Prophet, will venture to foretell, that as it will deserve, so it will draw on a *Second Reformation*; which probably may leave them in a much worse State, than at present they can possibly be said to be.

My Discourse tending now to a Close, permit me, my Brethren! Ye who are *Free-Thinkers*! and Ye who *Think Freely*! to make some Reflections both on what has been said, and also on *Religion*, a thing which some imagine gives you great Uneasiness, because they see Ye so vehemently oppose it. In former Days indeed, it would have been dangerous to have engaged either in so bold, or so open and vigorous an Opposition: * *Hobbs* was forced to write with

* Whoever has any Curiosity to see the Quintessence of many such like Pieces, may find them in *Sacheverell's Tryal*; the Doctor rightly conceiving, *Infidels* were false Brethren to the Cl—gy.

great Caution and Obscurity; *Spinoza*, whose small Tract of Political Divinity has been fired to so much Advantage, thro' the *Rights of the Christian Church*, and some other Books I could mention, remained long in great Privacy; while the Writings of *Servetus* shared the hard Fortune of their Author, and were doomed with the same Cruelty to Oblivion, as he was to Execution.

BUT thanks to the enterprizing Genius of the present Age, we have seen Religion attacked from all Quarters without Disguise; its Mysteries exposed by the deeply learned Mr. *Tol-d*, its Cl-gy totally ruined in the Opinion of a mad *Q--k*, and a stupid *Se--t*, by that exquisite Performance, the *Independent Whig*; thro' which the Road being opened, and the Out-works stormed, its Foundation was next batter'd, by the celebrated *Grounds and Reasons*, &c. and as a *Coup d' Eclair*, the Person and Miracles of its Divine Author villify'd and burlesqued in Mr. *W--ston's* never to be forgotten Discourses.

How great Success these vast Designs have met with, we may conjecture from the Number and Quality of our *Converts*, made up of *superannuated Physicians* and *Lawyers*, the lower Tribe of the *rakish Soldiery*, the whole Body of *intriguing Fops*,

Fops, a numerous Corps of those, who find Believing *no* Religion the best Opiate for the *Stings* of Conscience; a competent Number of *Smatterers*, who list themselves purely for the Vanity of passing for *Shrewd* Thinkers, *Country Squires* without Sense, *Poring Pedants* without Judgment, and here and there a *Disaffected Parson*, without (or with too *small*) Preferment: and all these against the utmost Efforts of the opposite Party, brought over by mere Dint of Reason, and Force of Argument: For it must be acknowledged (for our own Honour as well as the sake of Truth) that the Cl—gy have made a strenuous Resistance; for not to name those, who may be supposed to have had Reputation and Benefices in view, some of our Pre—tes have roused in Defence of Points, in which they have been grounded by Errors in Education, and shewn they were Chr—ans, when we took them but for B—ps: Nay the B—p of *Lon—n* outdid his Brethren, and three Things called *P—al L—rs*, each an humble Pamphlet, at so small a Price as Twelve Pence, has done us more Damage, and reclaimed more of our Profelites, than all the numerous Train of Demonstrations, Apologies or Justifications, that ever yet were Printed. However, since the *D—w—y* Sermon, I have gained fresh Hopes; and having strengthen'd all
our

our former Arguments with this learned Disquisition of *Priestcraft*, I began in my Thoughts to anticipate a certain Victory: Upon which it next occurred to me, that supposing Things should fall out as we would have them, and that *Natural* (which seems to be the View of our Ingenious Brother the Auth-r of the *Fable of the Bees*) as well as *Revealed Religion*, should be exploded; what shall we set up in their Room? for tho' most Religions have produced *Priestcraft*, yet I never in my Reading, could hear of any Nation, that could support itself without a *Priesthood*. And upon farther Reflection, I perceiv'd that the Laws of the Land could only keep Folks honest as to their Hands, but that Men might still be Rogues in their Hearts, in spite of them, tho' they should be contriv'd by a *P——y*, and executed by a *Ra——nd*.

WELL, not to keep you in Suspence, after mature Deliberation, I came to this Conclusion: That to preserve our Understandings from being impos'd on by Ridiculous and absurd Notions, under Pretence of Revelation; our Properties, from being invaded thro' Mens want of Conscience, and our Minds from being disturbed, every time we think of *Death*, from our having nothing to hope in, or to trust to: The *Protestant Religion*, as by Law established in this Kingdom,

Kingdom, with its *Hierarchy* rightly understood, and free from Priestcraft, ought to be received, as consonant to Reason, and agreeable to Free-Thinking: But the Proof of this, as it will require a larger Space and different Language, I must, in the Words of the Country *Parson*, refer to another *Opportunity*.



THE



THE
CONFESSION
OF
Parson B--W---N.

SAys the Vicar of D-wsb-ry, Friends, pray draw near;
I have something to say, you will smile when you
In form you must know, I a Priest was ordain'd, (hear.
But that Matter shall now be more fully explain'd;
When the Bishop approach'd, and his Hands on me laid,
(By whose Fingers I thought special Gifts were convey'd)
O how I rejoic'd, for I then apprehended,
That Ignorance fled, and Morals were mended;
But alas! by Experience I now understand,
'Twas a plain Imposition, and meer Slight of hand;
For, to speak my mind freely, I've not one jot more
Of Grace, or of Latin and Greek than before.
Why then in the Church do they make such ado
About Bishops, as if they're essential thereto?
A Bishop! what is he? why stay — let me see,
He's what I'm persuaded — I never shall be.
Then since I'm not likely to have such a Call,
I see no Necessity — for 'em at all.

That

That there must be some Mission, I readily own,
 And that there were Bishops at first 'tis well known;
 But yet I can shew in a manner most clever,
 That that Order was not to continue for ever.
 The good Kirk of Scotland to prove this I bring,
 With the English Dissenters, who have no such thing.
 Besides how could that (as some foolishly prate)
 Be fixt in Christ's Church which may endanger the State?
 That it may is most certain, because by the way,
 What was yesterday wholesome, is Poison to day.
 This is strict Demonstration, good People, I throw,
 It cannot be otherwise, — therefore 'tis so;
 To maintain which said Truth, to a Stake I'd be ty'd,
 And if that should e'er happen, then say B-w--n dy'd }
 A Martyr to Impudence, Nonsense and Pride.

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